



REPORT

ON THE SITUATION OF THE LGBT* PEOPLE
IN SAINT PETERSBURG IN 2020



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Coming Out LGBT* Initiative Group
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Text: Aleksandr Voronov, Polina Kislitsyna
Translation to English: Anastasia Labastova
Editing (original text): Vasilisa Moleva
Editing (English text): Anastasia Tikhonova
Design and layout: Karl Martin



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Glossary

We believe that it is important to use the most correct vocabulary, but we understand that not everyone, in whose hands this report falls, is guided by it. Therefore, at the very beginning, we present the terms and abbreviations used in the text, the meaning of which, in our opinion, may not be obvious.

BISEXUALITY – ability to experience emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to both men and women, not necessarily equally and simultaneously.

CISGENDER PEOPLE – people whose gender identity matches the gender assigned at birth.

DEADNAME – a name that a transgender person no longer uses; usually birth name. It can be legal (i.e. indicated in the documents), or it can be simply "dead", not indicated anywhere, if the records in the documents have been changed.

GENDER DYSPHORIA – discomfort associated with a discrepancy between a person's gender identity and gender assigned at birth; gender identity and primary and secondary sex characteristics; gender identity and the perception of a person's gender by others.

GENDER EXPRESSION – person's expression of different aspects of gender identity or gender role through appearance, behavior, choice of clothing and accessories.

GENDER IDENTITY – how a person perceives themselves, how they define themselves in terms of gender. A person can identify themselves as "male" (boy, man), "female" (girl, woman) or alternative (non-binary). Gender identity is an internally experienced sensation, and therefore it is not necessarily noticeable to others.

GENDER NON-CONFORMING – a person whose gender expression and behavior differs from those associated with the sex assigned at birth and does not meet the requirements of the stereotypes prevailing in society about how men or women should behave.

HOMOSEXUAL PEOPLE – people who are emotionally, romantically and/or

sexually attracted exclusively or predominantly to other people of the same gender identity.

INTERSEX – term used to describe the experience of a person born with sex characteristics (including genitals, sex glands, reproductive organs, and a set of chromosomes) that do not fit into the typical representation of a male or female body. Intersex variation may be noticeable at birth (for example, if a baby is born with “atypical” genitals), manifest itself during puberty (when puberty does not occur or goes differently from most people), while trying to conceive, or later in life. In some cases, person may never know they are intersex.

LGBT* – well-established acronym that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The asterisk in this acronym is used to denote the inclusion of other groups and identities.

NON-BINARY PERSON – person whose identity does not fit within a binary gender system (i.e. a person who does not fully identify themselves as either a woman or a man).

OUTING – disclosure of information about sexual orientation and/or gender identity or other stigmatized attribute of a person without their consent.

PANSEXUALITY – ability to experience emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to people regardless of gender. Gender and sex characteristics are irrelevant in relationship building for pansexual people (“I love a person, not their gender”).

SET-UP DATES – extortion faced usually by homosexual and bisexual men. After online dating, men, when meeting in person, become victims of blackmail with the risk of disclosing information about their sexual orientation.¹

SOGI – sexual orientation and gender identity.

SOGIGE – sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

TRANSGENDER PEOPLE – people whose gender identity does not match the gender assigned at birth.

¹ <https://comingoutspb.com/news/podstavnye-svidaniya-kak-sokhranit-zhizn-zdorove-i-koshelek/> (in Russian)

Introduction

This report is the result of the research carried out by Coming Out LGBT initiative group's monitoring program in 2020. We have been supporting the LGBT* communities of Saint Petersburg since 2008, drawing attention to the fight for equal rights of LGBT* people. We offer free-of-charge psychological and legal assistance, organize cultural events, help businesses to become more inclusive, help LGBT* people find jobs, and collect data on cases of discrimination and violence on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

In June 2013, the “propaganda law”² came into legal force; it was de jure aimed at preventing the propaganda of “non-traditional sexual relations” among minors, and de facto consolidated homo- and transphobia at the state level. Since then, unfortunately, it has been considered normal to call transgender people “transformers” in public politics³, and capturing the concept of marriage in the Constitution of the Russian Federation exclusively as a union of a man and a woman looks like a natural result.

And despite the fact that the laws and rhetoric of the authorities often seem to be distant and unrelated to real life, the general trend towards the approval and institutionalization of homophobia and transphobia affect the lives of ordinary people. These everyday manifestations of homophobia and transphobia are the subject of our research in this report.

Methodology

The survey was conducted from December 1, 2020 to January 25, 2021. Its main goal was to estimate the overall number of cases of homophobic and transphobic discrimination in Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast in 2020. We also set ourselves the task of evaluating the quality of life of LGBT* people in our region, their economic situation, housing conditions, access to education, medical and other services. This year, our separate

² Federal law adopted on 29.06.2013 No. 135-FZ “On amendments to article 5 of the Federal law “On Protection of Children against Information Detrimental to Their Health and Development” and certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation with the aim to protect children from information promoting denial of traditional family values”.

³ From a speech by Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G20 Summit in Osaka in June 2019.

task was to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the LGBT* community.

The survey was conducted primarily online with some of the questionnaires collected personally. In addition, the text of this report contains cases of discrimination and violence reported by the monitoring program during 2020.

The questionnaire included single and multiple choice questions as well as open questions, inviting the participants to provide more detailed information on any incidents. The accounts we have thus collected serve to illustrate the statistics we have gathered and allow us to create a more comprehensive picture of the situation of LGBT* people in Saint Petersburg and Leningrad region.

In this year's survey, we have significantly reduced the number of questions that are not related to the situation in 2020, as these data are already sufficiently described in the reports for 2018 and 2019. Additionally, in comparison with previous years, we have clarified the wording of some questions to make it easier for respondents to answer so that the data received from them were more accurate and reflect the issues of interest to us. Some of the answer options have been reduced. This has greatly simplified the presentation of the data, although it has limited our ability to compare it with data from previous years. Several new questions and a separate section on the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on various aspects of respondents' lives have appeared.

Duplicated and obviously implausible answers as well as aggressive anti-LGBT* statements were excluded from the resulting data set. Cisgender and heterosexual people were not participating in the survey this year as we found it impossible to distinguish between those who accidentally get into our sample and those who really could have been harmed on grounds of SOGIGE.

The text of the report contains quotes from respondents. They are labeled as how people who have written about their experiences identify themselves.

It is important to realize that the data we use reflect our respondents' subjective vision of their own situation and the discriminatory incidents they have experienced. Consequently, certain cases of discrimination may not have made it into our database since the survey participants may not

have experienced them as such. And conversely, certain reported violations may have originated in situations that did not fall into the legal categories we used when formulating the questionnaire and analyzing the results. In addition to this, there is a small probability that some respondents may have accidentally or deliberately, wishing to share their experiences, mentioned incidents that had taken place before 2020. We have to rely on the subjective judgments of our respondents and their assessments of the illegal actions they faced, counting on their honesty and attention to our issues.

In addition to the materials collected directly during the research, the text of the report uses information from the Coming Out legal assistance program and information collected in 2020 by the group’s monitoring program.

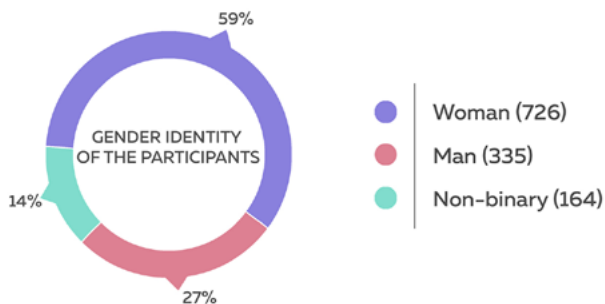
Demographic Portrait of Survey Participants

1225 persons aged 13-56 took part in the survey. The average age of our sample is 24,9, median age⁴ is 23. Half of the respondents are from the 18-24 age group.

Age	Number of people	% of the total number
13 to 17	111	9%
18 to 29	827	67,5%
18 to 24	612	50%
25 to 29	215	17,5%
30 to 39	226	18,5%
40 to 49	53	4,3%
50 and older	8	0,7%

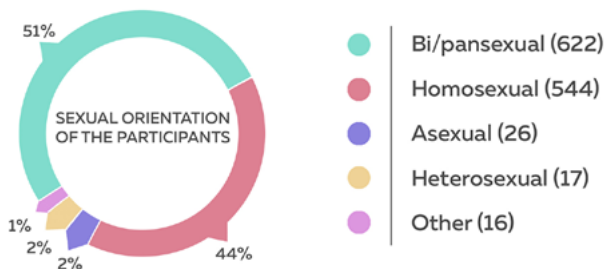
As in previous years, women still predominate in our sample (59%). The number of non-binary respondents is doubled since last year's survey (14% vs 7% in 2019 and 7,3% in 2018).

⁴ Median age is a characteristic of the sample by age, according to which half of the sample (50%) is younger than the specified age, and half (50%) is older.



18% of all respondents are transgender which is slightly more than in previous years: 14% in 2019 and 14,9% in 2018. The sample contains a small number of intersex persons (31 people, 2,5% of all respondents).

Half of the respondents identify as bisexual or pansexual (51%), slightly less than half as homosexual (44%). Other sexual orientations (heterosexual, asexual, demisexual, etc.) are significantly less represented (within 1-2%).



Slightly less than half of the respondents were born in Saint Petersburg or the Leningrad Oblast (46,1%). The majority of the respondents (96,7%) currently live in Saint Petersburg or Leningrad region.

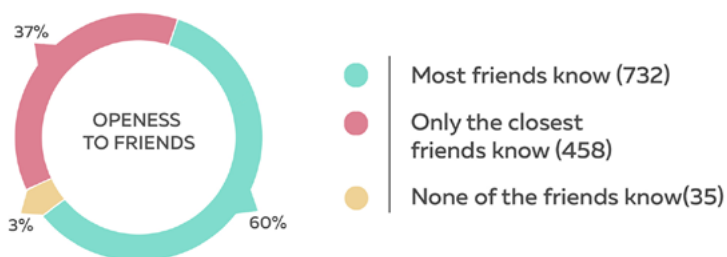
The majority of the respondents, 59% (719 people) have a higher education or are currently pursuing one, 15% (190 people) have secondary vocational, 23% (280 people) have secondary general, 3% (36 people) have elementary education.

Level of Openness and the Social Circles of Respondents

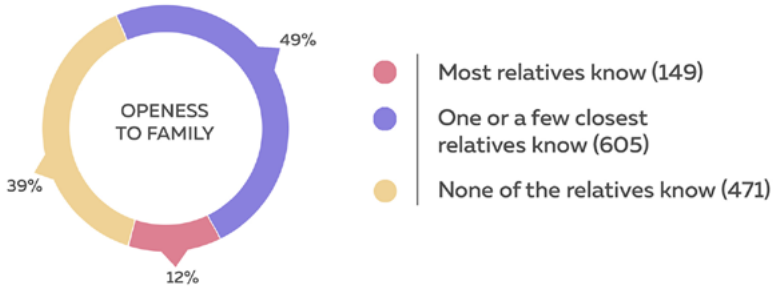
Answers to the question “Do you think that your appearance may have led people to guess your sexual orientation or transgender status?” split almost equally: 34% of the respondents believe that they can, 31% are not sure of this, and 35% are sure of the opposite.

A significant number of the respondents (60%) openly discuss their sexual orientation or gender identity in friendly circles. However, respondents are least willing to come out to family: 39% reported that none of their relatives know about their sexual orientation or transgender status. 14 people (1,1%) may be defined as fully “closeted”: their sexual orientation and/or transgender status is only known to their intimate partners. This is half of the last year respondents (2,4%).

Respondents who are most open (being out to most friends, family members and colleagues) are significantly older compared to the sample average: their average and median ages are 28 years. At the same time, the most closeted respondents (who did not come out to their relatives, friends, or colleagues) are younger: their average age is 23,9, and the median is 21.

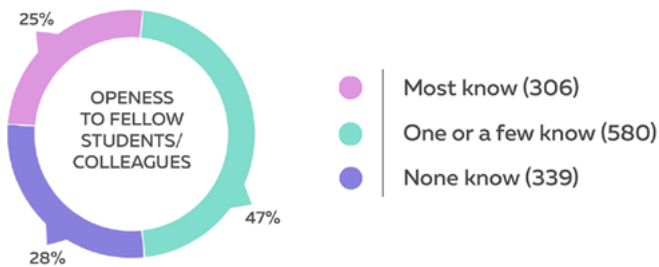


27,8% respondents (341 people) reported being forced to come out. According to the respondents, such situations are most often faced by transgender people who have not changed their documents yet thus any situation when their ID is seen by others leads to the forced disclosure of their transgender status. Many noted that they were forced to come out after direct questions from others who were beginning to guess. In addition, various actions on social media can also cause a forced coming out, like stories that become known to the general public more than users expected.



“Activists of the Male State movement sent a photo of me and my girlfriend to almost all my relatives who were not aware of us and due to their negative attitude towards LGBT people, we did not plan to tell. So the coming out happened against my will”

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 22).



“Everywhere I’m forced to come out. Shops, clinics, university. Especially if my gender seems as male, I have to prove that these are my documents in public. It even happened that people who saw my documents discussed me, pretending that I was not there. Plus, many, without really thinking, talk about me to everyone not worrying about my safety. I got used to it, but I’m determined to hide my transgender status after the transition”

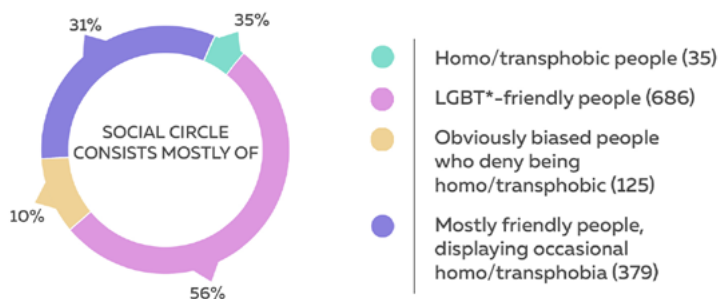
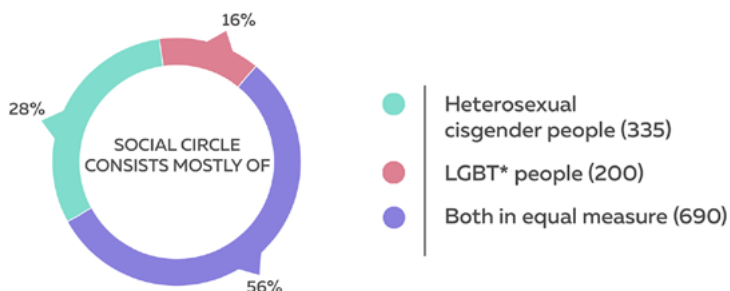
(a bisexual transgender man, 20).

“When I was applying for the current job, my boss-to-be called my former boss for a recommendation, and he, among other things, “warned” her that I was a “lesbian”. I found out about this almost by accident, because my boss is a tactful and tolerant woman, she did not force events until I came out to colleagues”

(a homosexual non-binary person, genderqueer, 34).

More than half of the respondents (56%) reported that their social circle consists equally of both LGBT* people and heterosexual cisgender people. The same number of respondents describe their circle as mostly LGBT*-friendly. Since 2018, the number of people in LGBT*-friendly environment has been gradually increasing: 46% in 2018, 53% in 2019 and 56% in 2020. We can assume that the sustainability of this tendency indicates a trend towards a gradual improvement in the attitude of Russian people towards LGBT* populations (at least in St. Petersburg).

Since people with intersecting identities are also participating in our survey (for example, bisexual non-binary persons), we offered our respondents an open question inquiring which identities they tend to disclose more often. Many noted that they find it easier discussing their sexual orientation rather than their non-binary or transgender identity which they hide or reveal only to the closest people. However, those transgender and non-binary people, whose gender non-conformity is noticeable to others, are forced or choose to speak in the first turn about their gender.



“At first I speak about sexual orientation, since not many have even heard of a non-binary identity, therefore, I am not talking about my transgender status to those who may not understand and/or condemn, even if they accepted my orientation”

(a bisexual non-binary transgender person, 19).

“Among friends, I calmly admit my bisexuality, but hide my doubts about “male” or “female” choices in the tests. I identify myself as non-binary person, and nobody knows about it”

(a bisexual non-binary person, 18).

“I am a pansexual non-binary person and I demonstrate to people and society that I am non-binary more often. I use pronouns and inflectional endings that don't match my gender assigned at birth and I don't live up to stereotypes about how a person with what I have in my underpants should or should not look like”

(a pansexual non-binary transgender person, 19).

Risks and Self-restrictions

In order to avoid homophobic or transphobic violence, many respondents exercise self-restraint. In order to avoid homophobic or transphobic violence, many respondents exercise self-restraint. Thus, slightly less than half of all survey participants (42,3%) reported that they try not to reveal their sexual orientation or transgender status to others through appearance or behavior, also avoiding showing feelings for their partner in public. One third of the respondents, seeking safety, avoid deserted streets and potentially dangerous neighborhoods. About one in five respondents carries personal defense equipment or at least always remains vigilant for fear of attack, avoids for security reasons attending any LGBT* events and does not go outside at night. There are other self-restrictions of LGBT* people: they are presented in the following table. At the same time, 22,9% of the respondents claim that they do not restrain themselves in any way.

Type of self-restraining behavior	Number of people	% of the total
Try not to betray their own SOGI to others through appearance or behavior	518	42,3%
Avoid public displays of affection for partners	513	41,9%
Avoid deserted streets and dangerous neighborhoods	412	33,6%
Carry self-defense equipment, have a plan of action in case of threats/assault, maintain constant vigilance	292	23,8%
Avoid going to gay clubs and LGBT* themed events for the sake of safety	291	23,8%
Avoid going out at night	279	22,8%
Don't use dating applications for the sake of safety	204	16,7%
Avoid using preferred name and pronouns in places where it might cause aggression	176	14,4%
Prefer not to be seen in the company of other LGBT* people whose SOGI are obvious from their appearance	117	9,6%
Avoid using their ID that does not align with their appearance and gender identity and might cause aggression	23	1,9%
Do not restrain themselves in any way	281	22,9%

Economic Situation of LGBT* People

Income Level

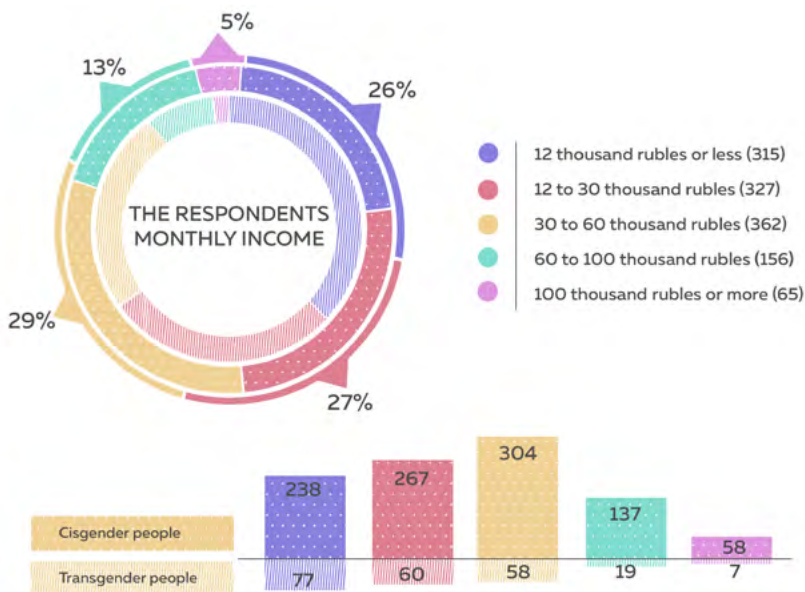
The economic situation of the majority of respondents can be called a financial distress or close to it. The monthly income of only 18% of respondents is equal to or higher than the average in Saint Petersburg⁵. 26% of the respondents earn less than 12 thousand rubles.

Such a low level of income is explained by the fact that the majority of survey participants are younger people. The median age of those whose

⁵ According to Petrostat, the average salary in Saint Petersburg in 2020 was 66 271 rubles.

income is less than 12 thousand rubles is 19. Accordingly, these are mainly schoolchildren and students who lack their own source of adequate income.

It is also worth noting the dire financial situation of transgender people: more than half of all transgender people (62%) earn less than 30 thousand rubles a month. Among the respondents with the highest income, there are few transgender people.



In addition to the question about the level of income, we also asked the respondents about their self-reported welfare. A third of the respondents (31,8%) can only afford food and medicine while purchasing clothing poses a challenge. Slightly less than half of the respondents (42,6%) can afford food, clothing and small household appliances, but cannot afford large purchases (such as a refrigerator or washing machine).

"I can't find a job or side job for a year because of "well, I don't understand at all who you are a boy or a girl, it is too difficult, we can't work with you" at every interview"

(a homosexual transgender man, 21).

Self-reported welfare	Number of people	% of the total number
I cannot afford food and medicine	52	4,3%
I can afford food and medicine but buying clothes and small household appliances/gadgets is a serious problem	390	31,8%
I can afford food, clothing and small household appliances/gadgets, but buying a TV, fridge or washing machine would be a challenge	522	42,6%
I can afford large household appliances, but I cannot afford a new car	151	12,3%
I earn enough to cover most of my needs except costly purchases such as a cottage or an apartment	42	3,4%
I have no financial difficulties whatsoever	68	5,6%

The majority of respondents (77,3%) have pointed out that in case of financial distress a partner or relatives might be able to support them. However, these are, on average, younger respondents: their average age is 24,2, and the median age is 22. Almost a third of the respondents (29,1%) will be able to live off their savings. Only a small part of people has passive income and will be able to rely on it in a critical situation. 13,5% of the respondents have nothing and nobody to rely on in case of financial straits.

195 respondents (15,9%) reported that they themselves have dependents.

At the same time, only 8% of respondents (94 people) believe that their sexual orientation or transgender status affects their economic situation. More than half of them are transgender (50 people). A fifth of the respondents found it difficult to answer whether there is such a connection in their lives.

Some respondents shared their views on how exactly sexual orientation or transgender status affects their financial situation. Primarily, they noted the impossibility of building a career or just working in certain areas

and the lack of financial support from relatives. Transgender people are often denied jobs at the interview stage.

“I have not made the medical transition and am not planning for a number of reasons. But my dysphoria is especially strong socially, which literally ruins my whole life. I find it very difficult to talk on the phone and even more so on the zoom. While working, I have to use a deadname in communication, which is also hard for me every time. Due to dysphoria and dysmorphophobia, I cannot find a worthy position and communicate with colleagues in order to better fulfill my duties. For me, even creating a portfolio is a psychologically difficult process, I always have to make a choice in favor of the personality and life that I hate”

(a bisexual transgender man, 25).

“In the past, I couldn't gain promotion. My first degree was in education, but I can't work as a teacher. I'm afraid to work in schools and educational institutions”

(an asexual transmasculine non-binary person, 45).

Structure of Earnings

A third of the respondents (386 people, 31,5%) have no reliable source of income. Half of them are aged 18 and under. However, there are also adults who have lost their means of livelihood. Among them, 37 people indicated that they did not have financial support from anyone. Some of them described their life situations, which often include loans, debts and unemployment. Some write that they themselves do not know how they manage to cope at the moment and what to do next.

“I was suddenly fired without proper prior warning. Filed a lawsuit. Having lost my job, I also lost the opportunity to pay for housing, for myself and my child. Acquaintances offered to live for several months at their country house for free, if I would help with the housework. Can't get a job because of litigation. There is only a month left to live in the house, as relatives of acquaintances are coming for a long time. I have no idea what I will do next...”

(a bisexual transgender man, 35).

Most of respondents with a reliable source of income (839 people, 68,5%) have regular jobs. 23% of them lack official employment therefore their labor rights are not protected in any way. Other types of income are presented in the following table.

Source of income	Number of people	% of people with regular income (839 people)
Regular job	554	66%
Freelance	87	10,4%
Part-time job	52	6,2%
Government allowance	40	4,8%
Scholarship or grant	39	4,6%
Passive income	27	3,2%
Odd jobs	22	2,6%
Other	18	2,2%

"I am looking for a permanent job. I have arrears in rent and loans totaling 150 thousand rubles. Since September 2020 I've been working as a cleaner for 12 thousand rubles. Was registered as unemployed at the employment center"

(an asexual transgender man, 29).

"Last year I had to take out a loan, this year my partner and I are struggling to make ends meet. The whole problem is that when we took out a loan, no one knew about the coronavirus yet. It was difficult for me, since I alone had a job while my partner couldn't find a new one. As a result, for six months I had to pay for an apartment, for food for two, for all other expenses, which did not have a very good effect on my mental health :(And this, in turn, now leads to problems at work"

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 20).

More than half of the respondents with a regular income are employed in the trade and service sector or work in the spheres of education, science and culture. The distribution by the remaining spheres of occupation is presented in the following table.

Sphere of occupation ⁶	Number of people	% of people with taxable regular income (733 people)
Trade, service sector	282	38,5%
Education, Science, Culture	165	22,5%
Industry, Construction	56	7,6%
Healthcare	53	7,2%
Connections, Transport	37	5%
IT	35	4,8%
Media, Publishing	34	4,6%
Finances, Insurance	26	3,5%
NGO (non-profit)	22	3%
Administrative management	17	2,3%
Law	9	1,2%
Design	9	1,2%
Police, Army, Security Services	4	0,5%

Attitudes Towards Sex Work

6% (74 people) of the respondents have been paid for sex, escort services or webcam modeling in 2020. Most often mentioned is webcam modeling. Some were selling their erotic pictures.

⁶ Multiple choice question.

"I have dated rich adult men for travel, entertainment and shopping. But there was only talk, no sex"

(a homosexual cisgender man, 25).

"I was contacted in VK (Russian social network) in the thematic group, offered to work as a webcam model and I agreed. I worked there for a while, but once I was offered sex work, I agreed. Everything went well and I liked it, I quit webcam modeling, posted a profile on the call girls website and now sometimes go to personal meetings"

(a heterosexual transgender woman, 15).

"I managed to get some money for private photos, since at birth my gender was assigned as female (accordingly, it was necessary to behave like a woman both in conversation and on the set). After that, I was overcome with dysphoria for a while, but overall it was a rather pleasant experience"

(a bisexual transgender non-binary person, 21).

"For two months I worked in webcam modeling in order to earn money for a new phone, because the old one broke down and phone for me is must-have"

(a bisexual transgender non-binary person, 21).

286 people (23,4%) were considering working in sex industry. In 2020, their number increased by 4,3% compared to the previous year. Some of those who shared their experiences said such thought was triggered by the pandemic and the associated crisis. For some, this was the result of despair and extreme poverty, for others sex work seemed like an easy money or an experiment. Many said that in the end they did not dare to do it, because they were afraid of condemnation or rejection of others, and they themselves considered this work unacceptable.

"I am a doctor in the red zone and have been working nonstop since March. I can't take it anymore, I'm ready to work for the same money even in webcam modeling"

(a homosexual transgender non-binary genderfluid person, 26).

“When I was out of work during self-isolation, I thought of going to work as a webcam model or something like that. But everything worked out”

(a homosexual cisgender man, 31).

“I seriously considered working as a webcam model. I heard that they earn a lot there. Of course, I thought about it because of the difficult situation. But, most likely, I won't do it, since it is scary that my parents will find out about this”

(a biromantic asexual cisgender woman, 19).

Situation in the Spheres of Labor and Education

Half of our respondents (621 people) were students in 2020. Every tenth of them (9,5%, 59 people) thought about quitting studies being subjected to homophobic and transphobic pressure. 7 of the survey respondents chose to quit their studies due to homophobic or transphobic prejudice among the students, teachers or administration. The majority of respondents (87,6%) reported that in 2020 they did not have any SOGIGE-related problems with their studies.

Almost a quarter of those who were looking for a new job or study in 2020 faced some kind of problems because of their sexual orientation or transgender status. A third of those who were looking for an employment or study looked for it only where there was a minimal risk of facing homo- or transphobia. A fifth refused the desired place because of fear to meet there a homophobic or transphobic prejudice. These numbers indicate that many LGBT* people exercise self-restraint, which certainly affects their career opportunities and economic situation.

“As a unit manager, I recruited half of the staff from LGBT* people, and senior management reprimanded me for creating a “chicken coop”

(a homosexual cisgender man, 33).

“I started working for a company where my parents work. And, unfortunately, I got a lot of negative emotions because of the pressure from them. “Nobody should find out”, “Don't demean the family”, etc.”

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 19).

Problems finding study / work ⁷	Number of people	% of people looking for a study / work (571 people)
Did not enroll in the desired educational institution in 2020 due to fears of difficulties with homophobic or transphobic prejudices of others	22	3,9%
Did not apply for a vacancy of interest or look for a job in an area of interest in 2020 precisely because this job has a high risk of facing homophobia / transphobia	95	16,6%
Was looking for a job in 2020 only with the minimum risk of facing homophobia / transphobia (in certain spheres, only by acquaintance, etc.)	178	31,2%
Were denied employment/enrollment with sexual orientation/transgender status/gender expression openly given as motivation	19	3,3%
Were denied employment/enrollment under other pretexts, but the respondents are sure that the real reason was their SOGIGE	39	6,8%
Did not have any SOGIGE-related problems in finding a job / study in 2020	450	78,8%

217 people have been subjected to homophobic and transphobic pressure at work or study in 2020. The reported pressure people faced most often came in the form of taunts, disapproval and criticism that created an unsafe and unpleasant environment in the workplace or study area. In addition, biased attitudes from colleagues, bosses or teachers can directly affect work or studying processes.

“Colleagues refused to work with me in one shift ... and the bosses had a prejudice”
(a heterosexual transgender man, 34).

⁷ Multiple choice question.

“I almost got kicked out of college for dating a girl, and at the moment my whole group is boycotting me because they think I’m mentally ill”

(a bisexual transgender non-binary person, agender, 17).

5 people lost their jobs or were forced to quit their studies in 2020 with sexual orientation/ transgender status openly given as motivation by bosses or administration. Another 33 people were dismissed/laid off/expelled under other pretexts, but the respondents are sure that the real reason was their sexual orientation/ transgender status. And another 30 people chose to quit work/studies due to a homophobic/ transphobic pressure.

Type of incident	Number of people
Were dismissed/expelled, with sexual orientation/ transgender status openly given as motivation	5
Were dismissed/laid off/expelled under other pretexts, but the respondents are sure that the real reason was their SOGIGE	17
Management suggested that they voluntarily resign/quit studies, the respondents believe this was motivated by their SOGIGE	16
Were threatened with dismissal/ expulsion in case their sexual orientation/ transgender status became widely known	13
Chose to quit work/studies due to a homophobic/ transphobic atmosphere and prejudice among colleagues/teaching staff/fellow students	30

“I was fired without explanation. The boss disliked me and turned the team against me...”

(a bisexual transgender man, 35).

I quit my job, where the client wrote a complaint about my flamboyant appearance with the comment “you’ve got some fag working there”

(a homosexual cisgender man, 31)

“I was forced to quit from my last job a year after the start of the transition because it was necessary to introduce yourself to government agencies by phone with a legal name (it was the military). I was not allowed to use my chosen name, they said that there would be problems, and that my voice with my female ID would raise more questions. They called me down to the director’s office, saying “But you are a woman!” and so on. At the end I had to dismiss at my own request. Since then, I have not been able to get a job again”

(a bisexual transgender man, 32).

Health of LGBT* People

Discrimination in the Healthcare services

Talking about medicine and health in 2020, it is impossible not to raise the topic of the COVID-19 pandemic. We took a separate small section of the survey where we tried to research the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting restrictions on our respondents’ access to healthcare services.

32,3% of respondents faced difficulties in accessing medical care, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (such as cancellation of planned hospitalization, re-profiling of hospitals, etc.). According to the answers, the most affected respondents were people with HIV-positive status, transgender people in transition process or planned to start it in 2020, as well as people who need regular psychiatric help or new prescriptions for medications (most often antidepressants).

“Due to the restrictions caused by the pandemic, I had to postpone the transgender transition commission for several months”

(a heterosexual transgender man, 18).

“It became more difficult for me to get my ART pills at the AIDS Center”

(a bisexual transgender non-binary person, 19).

“I couldn’t get to a sexologist to register my transgender status”

(a homosexual transgender non-binary person, 23).

"In the first months of the pandemic, I could not visit my psychiatrist to renew my prescription for antidepressants. I had to save pills, so my mental state got worse (I have BPD)"

(a homosexual non-binary person, 22).

74% of respondents (1017 people) who sought treatment in 2020 disclose their sexual orientation or transgender status to at least one doctor. And in some cases, coming out in a medical institutions was the reason for the negative attitude of doctors: 12 people were denied medical care, 7 of them are transgender people. Every tenth who sought treatment in 2020 faced inappropriate questions from doctors or other hospital staff. Dozens of LGBT* people have faced taunts, attempts to "cure" their sexual orientation or transgender identity, and explaining any medical problems by their orientation or gender identity.

"In my medical card, a clinical psychologist wrote: sex-role behavioral disorder. I don't know what she means by that. This is how they used to call transgender status. And I'm a cisgender lesbian. Most likely this is simply the lack of education of this "specialist"

(a homosexual cisgender woman, 22).

"They wanted to cure my boyfriend of homosexuality. His dentist said she wouldn't treat him if he didn't become normal"

(a homosexual cisgender man, 31).

"My former attending doctor told my parents that my transgender status is made up. I once took a test for COVID-19, the doctor needed to listen to my chest, and when she saw the binder, she began to touch it and begrudge at why I hide my breasts and why I look "like a boy when you're a girl"

(a bisexual transgender non-binary person, 17).

"My girlfriend and I went to see a narcologist to get driving certificates. I had a normal dialogue with the doctor, but my partner had a tough one. She wore my gift that day, a rainbow badge. The "specialist" threw insults: "homosexuality is a disease". He did not want to sign her certificate. We left the clinic, as it is easy to guess, in a very bad mood"

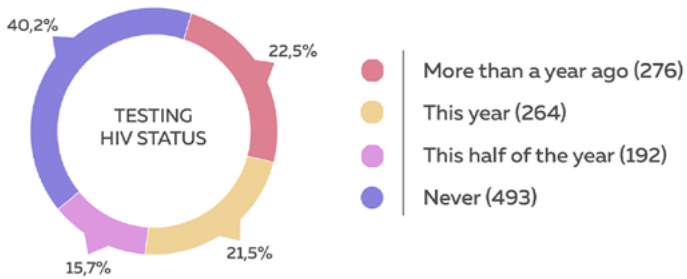
(a bisexual cisgender woman, 20).

Type of problem	Number of people	% of those who saw a doctor in 2020 (1017 people)
Denial of medical services on grounds of sexual orientation or transgender status	12	1,2%
Denial openly motivated by the patients' sexual orientation or transgender status	6	0,6%
Denial motivated by other reasons (but the respondents believe the true reason to be their sexual orientation or transgender status)	6	0,6%
Doctors asking inappropriate questions related to sexual orientation or transgender status	105	10,3%
Doctors joking about sexual orientation or transgender status	56	5,5%
Doctors explaining medical issues by sexual orientation or transgender status	39	3,8%
Doctors offering to "cure" sexual orientation or transgender status	28	2,8%
Doctors outing patients	14	1,4%
Doctors insulting patients because of sexual orientation or transgender status	9	0,9%
Patients being forcefully kept in a medical institution or treated without consent	1	0,1%

"My attending psychotherapist was trying to convince me that my homosexuality can and, most importantly, need to be cured. She also revealed this secret to my parents, and they were not supposed to know it"

(a homosexual cisgender woman, 17).

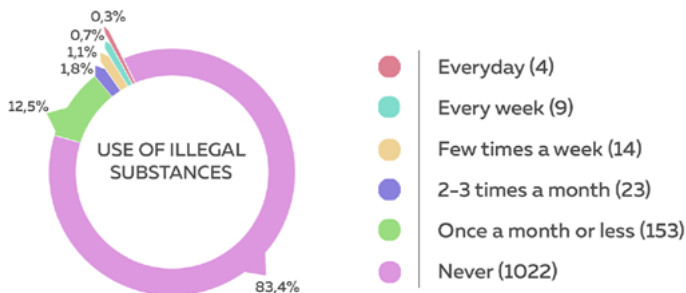
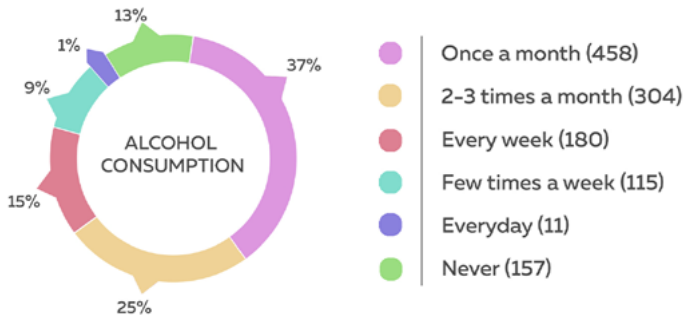
Given the data on how often LGBT* people face discrimination in medical institutions, it is important to note that 40% of respondents have never tested their HIV status. This is an alarming figure given the ongoing HIV epidemic in Russia.



Substance Use

Every tenth respondent reported drinking alcohol several times a week and more often, although the majority of respondents demonstrated a reasonable frequency of alcohol consumption.

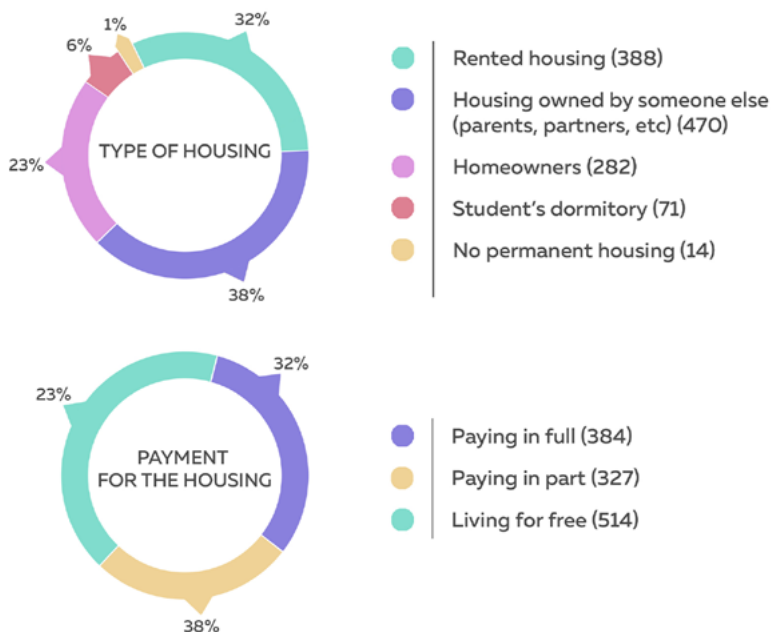
The share of respondents who use illegal psychoactive substances more often than once a month is less than 4% in total. The majority indicated that they had never used it at all.



Housing

One third of our respondents (32%) live in rented housing. 38% of respondents live on someone else's territory: with their parents, partner or friends. 23% are homeowners. Compared to last year, the number of those who live in rented housing has decreased (in 2019, there were 38% of them), and the number of those who live with someone has increased (in 2019, there were 31% of them).

The share of those who do not pay for their housing on their own has also increased: this year there are 42% of such respondents, compared to 36% in 2019. Less than a third pay for their accommodation entirely on their own (last year there were 36% of them).



"I rented a house, and the neighbors, little old ladies, informed the landlords that a girl was visiting me with an overnight stay. After that they did not speak directly, but pressed me very hard with indirect questions, came to the house suddenly, etc. When I moved out, they actually tried to squeeze all possible information out of me. I experienced tremendous stress, and I still do"

(a homosexual cisgender woman, 30).

This may be a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic: many have lost their jobs and were unable to live in rented housing, so they return to their parents or move to a partner. At the same time, such a difference compared to last year may be associated with age differences in the sample: in 2019, the average age of respondents was slightly higher, which means that the number of those who moved out from their parents could have been higher too.

In 2020, 133 respondents faced difficulties related to housing due to their sexual orientation or transgender status. Most often, problems arise in communication with neighbors and during the search for housing.

“I was denied renting an apartment when they found out that I’m gay”
(a homosexual cisgender man, 28).

Type of problem	Number of people
Conflicts with neighbors due to sexual orientation and / or transgender status	73
Difficulty finding housing due to sexual orientation and / or transgender status	52
Deprived of housing due to sexual orientation and / or transgender status	26
Conflicts with landlords due to sexual orientation and / or transgender status	14

Discrimination in the Service Sector

81 respondents faced homophobic and transphobic discrimination when seeking some type of service in 2020. 6 more cases were documented by the Coming Out monitoring program. The most frequent problem our respondents faced was a requirement on the part of the service provider to hide their sexual orientation or transgender status, also many respondents reported being denied services under a certain pretext, being convinced that the real reason for this denial was homophobic or transphobic prejudice.

In addition to this, transgender people often face refusal to provide services in banks, employment centers and other similar institutions due to the discrepancy of their gender identity with their ID information.

“The woman who made repairs for me for money simply stopped doing it without informing me, and then wrote messages insulting me because of my sexual orientation”

(a homosexual cisgender woman, 34).

“The bank refused to service and consult me over the phone (I have a male voice and female ID) and when I personally went to the bank, I was almost accused of forging documents, they called the security, in the end they provided the services, but with great difficulties”

(a bisexual transgender man, 32)

“The specialist at the employment center refused to accept my documents for registration of unemployment because of my transgender status and my documents which weren’t changed yet”

(a homosexual transmasculine person, 26).

Type of incident	Number of people
Requirement to hide sexual orientation or transgender status stated by service provider	35
Denial of service under another pretext, sexual orientation or transgender status being obviously the true reason	28
Goods/services being substandard due to customers’ sexual orientation or transgender status	15
Denial of service openly motivated by sexual orientation or transgender status	11
Denial of service in a government service institution due to sexual orientation or transgender status	11

Parental Rights

56 respondents reported that they have children. Three of them are adoptive parents. Only one of the adopters reported that they had problems in the adoption process (before 2020). There are little cases of violation of parental rights among our respondents. They are mainly associated with conflicts with relatives, employees of children's services, as well as children's educational and medical institutions. Those who agreed to describe in more detail the difficulties of LGBT* parenting reported that the problems relate to interaction with the child's classmates, their parents and teachers:

"I know that some parents of my daughter's classmates forbade them to contact with her and visit our house because of my orientation"

(a homosexual cisgender woman, 38).

"I am in constant fear for my child, because at school they believe that we are not partners, but cousins. We are afraid that the child will accidentally tell about it and become a victim of some kind of homophobic violence"

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 34).

Freedom of Assembly and Freedom of Speech

55 respondents participated in LGBT*-themed street protests in 2020 (actions, rallies, flashmobs). Almost a half of them faced problems and violations of their rights, mostly insults, threats and outing. It is worth noting that this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were significantly fewer street actions than in the past. So, in 2019, almost three times as many respondents (149 people) participated in various street LGBT* events, of which more than half (60%, 90 people) faced various problems because of it. In 2020, the situation is as follows:

Type of incident	Number of people
The total of those who faced violation of their rights during LGBT*-themed street protests in 2020	24
Insults	23
Threats	10
Disclosure of sexual orientation/gender identity to people who were not supposed to know it	6
Assault	3
Harassment (including online harassment)	2
Detention	1

In addition to the above, and especially given the relatively small number of public events in 2020, it is also worth noting here the disruption of the International LGBT film festival Bok o Bok (Side by Side), which, due to the claims of Federal Service for Supervision of Consumers Protection and the Ministry of Internal Affairs had to be held only in an online format this year⁸. Also, the statistics does not include 11 arrests associated with one-man protests against the bill, which, if officially entered into force, would make life for LGBT* people much more difficult⁹. In both situations, the formal reasons for police actions were coronavirus-related restrictions. Homophobic and Transphobic Violence

Hate-motivated Physical Abuse and Assault

72 respondents reported having faced homophobia or transphobia motivated physical violence in 2020. In half of the cases (54%) the

8 <https://takiedela.ru/news/2020/11/13/bok-o-bok-sud/> (in Russian)

9 <https://novayagazeta.ru/news/2020/07/18/163116-v-peterburge-nachalis-zaderzhaniya-na-piketah-protiv-popravok-mizulinoy-ogranichivayuschih-prava-odnopolyh-par-i-transgend-erov> (in Russian)

attackers were strangers in public places reacting aggressively to gender non-conformity of LGBT* people and their gender expression. In the remaining half of the cases, the attackers were familiar to the respondents: they are relatives, friends of friends, neighbors.

“Several times I was almost pushed under a subway train, beaten on the street”
(a bisexual transgender bigender person, 18).

Type of incident	Number of people
Assault by strangers	39
Assault by familiar people	37
Assault by criminal/homophobic groups	14
Assault during LGBT*- themed public events (actions, rallies, flashmobs)	3

“I am the admin of one of the big LGBT* meetings in Saint Petersburg, at one of the meetings the Nazis (about 10 huge guys) used pepper and shot shells filled with pepper, many were injured”

(a heterosexual transgender man, 18).

“On the subway, two male strangers hit me hard on the back because of the rainbow cloth patch on my backpack”

(a bisexual non-binary transmasculine person, 18).

Threats and Threatening Behavior

Every fifth respondent (19,6%) was threatened in 2020 with physical violence due to their sexual orientation or transgender status. Another 12 people reported similar cases to the Coming Out monitoring program. The share of those who faced threats has increased since last year: in 2019 there were 16% respondents, in 2018 – 14%. It can be assumed that homophobic and transphobic threats are becoming more common.

Most often, threats come from strangers offline, although a third of all victims of threats faced them both in person (including conflicts on the streets, which are more common) and on the Internet.

Type of incident	Number of people
Offline threats (in a personal conversation, during an argument, on the street or in a public place from passers-by) only	89
Online threats (social media, email, etc.) only	71
Threats received both online and offline	80
Threats from strangers	195
Threats from familiar people	78
Threats from homophobic activists/criminal groups	59
Threats from counterdemonstrators and aggressive public during LGBT*-themed public events and street protests	22

“On the dating site where I’m looking for a girlfriend, a lot of homophobic men write disgusting things in their direct messages. But this is almost common for me, and I do not react to it in any way. Although I remember how I used to be very scared. I was really afraid that they would find me and beat me”

(a homosexual cisgender woman, 39).

“I was threatened by the TERF¹⁰ and some strangers on the internet. They threatened to find me and do something to me, it was scary. Relatives with whom I had to live in the midst of the pandemic threatened me with some kind of abuse”

(a homosexual transgender non-binary agender, 20).

“I mostly get insults from strangers on the street at night, if I don’t look masculine or feminine enough. Usually these are phrases like: “Fag”, “I will kill you, faggot”, “Are you a boy or a girl?”

(a homosexual transgender genderqueer person, 24).

10

Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists.

More than a third of all respondents (36,8%) faced insulting online comments or messages in 2020. Another 64 people faced organized homophobic or transphobic cyber bullying.

“Every time I leave a comment about my sexual orientation under a video on YouTube on this topic, 1-2 men always answer me with a “request” to watch it (that is, look at my sex with another girl)”

(a homosexual non-binary woman, 22).

“I was bullied by radfern for being pansexual and having a transgender boyfriend. And this happened in spaces dedicated not to feminism, LGBT* and other movements for rights, but to computer gaming, art or hobbies. I was systematically terrorized with messages, harassed and stalked, even in an attempt to change to another personal page”

(a pansexual cisgender woman, 22).

“I use they / them pronouns. One man found my profile on a dating site (where I talked about myself using these pronouns) and wrote a long message with insults, including laughing at my pronouns, saying it's just for the attention. He used the right pronouns but that was offensive too, he spoke of me as an animal”

(a bisexual fluidflux person, 19).

Type of incident	Number of people	% of the total
Single insulting online comments/messages	451	36,8%
Organized homophobic/transphobic cyber bullying	64	5,2%

Sexual Violence

77 respondents reported having faced sexual violence due to sexual orientation or transgender status. In more than half of these cases (61%), sexual violence was perpetrated by individuals whom the victim knows well. In some cases it had been committed in attempt to “change” victims’ sexual orientation or transgender status. In other cases, committed or attempted sexual violence was associated with a desire to “take advantage” of a person's sexual orientation and vulnerable position.

“I don't know if it counts, but I've been told right to my face that I was not a guy – I have boobs! And I was groped at the same time, apparently for presentation purposes. It was very unpleasant”

(a homosexual transgender man, 16).

“About six months ago, we were drinking with friends at a birthday party. I didn't drink and didn't feel very well, so I decided to go to bed earlier. As a result, at night I woke up from the fact that bed linen has been pulled off me and, well, you know what kind of actions were about to take place”

(a homosexual cisgender man, 19).

“It was this winter, a friend of the boss came to our bar. While he was waiting for the boss, he sat, drank and tried to dig into my head. I don't know how, but he realized that I belong to the LGBT* community, and began to say that I just didn't have a man and I just needed to trust him. The situation was complicated by the fact that there was no one in the bar except the two of us. He smashed a glass of water, most likely on purpose, and I had to leave from behind the counter to sweep up the shards. And as soon as I approached him at a distance of less than a meter, he began to squeeze me into a corner saying that he can help me. And I am so grateful to fate that at that moment the boss returned to the bar and took him to another hall”

(a homosexual cisgender woman, 22).

Property Damage and Theft

59 participants of the survey faced property damage or theft motivated by their sexual orientation or transgender status. Judging from the situations described, most reports are about rainbow badges and other LGBT* symbols, torn off by aggressive passers-by. Quantitative data indicate that most often property damage or theft is committed by strangers met by chance. However, there have been other cases of theft and property damage.

“We had a rainbow door mat from IKEA. Some of the neighbors damaged it by smearing it in fuel oil (I don't know exactly what it was). It became scarier to live in my own home”

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 20).

“It happened towards the end of spring. Two strangers saw a rainbow badge on my chest, came up and in a rather aggressive tone told me to take it off and give it to them. It was already getting dark, and the street was deserted, so for the sake of self-preservation I did not resist. First, one tried to scratch the badge with a fingernail, but the second quickly grabbed it, threw it on the ground and crushed it aggressively. After that, they just left, and I picked up the badge and still wear it, despite the fact that some of the coating has worn off”

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 18).

Who stealed / damaged property	Number of people
Strangers	36
Familiar people	28
Criminal/homophobic groups	7
Counter demonstrators and aggressive public during LGBT*-themed public events and street protests	1

Domestic Violence

The pandemic has affected the lifestyles of many people. 114 respondents reported that they had to stay in the same house with homophobic or transphobic relatives during self-isolation. 181 respondents faced some form of homophobic and transphobic domestic violence in 2020. The monitoring program has documented another 7 cases of this type that took place in 2020.

Most of the reports are about psychological abuse and intrusion into a person's privacy. However, according to the responses, there are also dozens of cases of physical violence, threats and attempts to “cure” sexual orientation or transgender status.

“This summer, after I came out to my parents, my mom manipulated me by trying to change my orientation, using her health as an argument (if there are strong emotions => heart problems will appear)”

(a homosexual cisgender man, 19).

“My partner faced a similar situation. She has problems with alcohol consumption, and this circumstance plus homophobia started a conflict with her relatives. [...] For my part, she tried to fight me twice, drunk as it was then, infuriated and saying that she looks like a “dyke” that way and hates herself”

(a homosexual cisgender woman, 25).

“I often have to face psychological pressure and attempts to change my orientation to the “correct” one. I try not to get involved in disputes, as I can lose financial support”

(a homosexual cisgender woman, 23).

Type of incident	Number of people
Total of those who faced domestic violence	181
Psychological pressure from relatives (disregard for the coming-out, demands to change sexual orientation or transgender status, persistent comments about private life and appearance, blackmail, entreaties, advice, etc)	172
Other forms of invasion of privacy (stalking, online surveillance, surveillance of friends/partners, attempts to control movement and contact with other people, etc)	91
Attempts to “cure”/“change” sexual orientation or transgender status (forced visits to “specialists”, forced participation in religious practices, confinement in a medical institution, etc)	42
Threats (of physical violence, murder, confinement, etc) from relatives	25
Physical violence (battery, assault, etc)	18
Kidnapping or unlawful deprivation of liberty by relatives (relocation without consent, confinement at home, deprivation of freedom of movement, confiscation of ID, etc)	18
Sexual violence by relatives	8

“My mother says that if she finds out that I am LGBT, she’ll kill herself. She stalks me on social media and constantly asks about the slightest acquaintances. She also asks every month if I really consider myself a girl, and conducts “conversations” with me on this topic. This is one of the main reasons why my mental state is deteriorating and why I am considered a “chronic patient” in a psychoneurologic dispensary”

(a bisexual transgender man, 23).

“I’ve been locked at home, they forbade me to go anywhere, took away and hid my phone”

(a bisexual non-binary person, 17).

Set-up Dates and Blackmail

13 respondents became the victims of a “set-up dates” in 2020, 6 of these people reported that they ended up paying the criminals. Every tenth of the survey participants (10%) reported knowing someone who became the victim of that kind of robbery.

109 survey participants faced blackmail or extortion involving threats of disclosure of their sexual orientation or transgender status in 2020. The Coming Out legal assistance program has documented another 6 cases of this type and another 5 was documented by monitoring program. Most often, blackmail and extortion are carried out by strangers on the Internet. In some cases, blackmail included the disclosure of not only information about sexual orientation and transgender status, but also nude photos or videos. It should be noted that in many situations, attempts to blackmail respondents did not lead to anything, since they were ready for this and reacted calmly.

“It was in August. Some madam wanted to talk, wrote that she was from an LGBT group, and I thought, why not get to know each other. We started chatting and flirting, I was in another city at that moment. And then after some time she asked me to send her a naked photo, and she was the first to do it, so I believed it and sent it too, and then I was threatened, by two accounts. They screened my relatives, started blackmailing me that they would tell them about my orientation and send that pictures. In the end, I just deleted my personal page and everything worked out”

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 18).

“This happened in early January. I was on the webcam roulette for gays, and was recorded on video with a face, found on VK and threatened that they would send it to my relatives”

(a homosexual cisgender man, 30).

Blackmail / extortion	Number of people
Blackmail / extortion form	
Online (social media, email, etc.) only	65
Offline (in a personal conversation, during an argument, on the street or in a public place from passers-by) only	25
Both online and offline	19
Who blackmails / extorts	
Strangers	71
Familiar people	47

Outing

84 respondents were outed i.e. had their sexual orientation or transgender status disclosed without their consent and with the aim to cause harm. Another 303 people reported that they were outed without malicious purpose. Often friends or family of respondents share information about their sexual orientation or transgender status with mutual acquaintances without asking permission.

“Sometimes in new companies, my friends can talk about my orientation without my consent. They are used to me talking about it openly. Usually this is not a problem, but I do not consider it normal, since you never know how a stranger will react”

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 19).

“After the breakup, my ex-boyfriend deliberately told most (homophobic) mutual acquaintances about my bisexuality”

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 18).

“A friend wrote about my orientation on her Instagram without my permission. Some of my colleagues are subscribed to her, and at work I am “in the closet”. I reacted quickly and asked her to remove it, there seemed to be no consequences”
(a bisexual cisgender woman, 19).

“My mother called all our relatives and told them about me to be pitied and supported”
(a bisexual cisgender man, 20).

Interactions with Law Enforcement Authorities

Half of the survey respondents (50,4%) reported that they did not face any discrimination on grounds of homophobia or transphobia in 2020, but if they did, they would report it to the police. 43,8% reported that though they did not face any hate crime in 2020, they would avoid contacting the law enforcement authorities, if they did.

The opposite situation can be seen among those who reported that they faced hate crime in 2020.¹¹ In our sample, there are only 71 such people, which correlates poorly with the data presented in the section about violence and other forms of aggression. It should be pointed out that only 72 people reported being physically violated. This discrepancy in data may be due to the fact that the concept of violence in our survey is interpreted broadly in comparison with the criminal and administrative legislation of the Russian Federation. As by sexual violence we mean not only rape, but also harassment and other types of violation of personal boundaries, for which it is difficult to bring a person to justice with the help of law enforcement authorities. In addition, such a discrepancy may reflect the fact that many respondents do not know what exactly can be classified as a hate crime and when they can contact the law enforcement.

“There were two cases. First: they let the criminal leave during the fight, and said that if you don’t want to be beaten, then don’t look like that. Second: the police officer made several remarks about my hair and in response to my displeasure hit me in the face”

(a homosexual genderfluid person, 20).

¹¹ These respondents make up almost half of those who faced physical violence (47,9%) and “set-up dates” (46%), and more than a third of those who faced property damage or theft (39%).

“Assault, beatings, use of a shocker and a baton, extortion by police officers”

(a homosexual cisgender man, 46).

So the data about trust in law enforcement reported by victims of crimes motivated by homophobia or transphobia is completely different from others. Only a quarter of the victims went to the police (17 people), while three quarters of the victims did not. In addition to that, 11 out of 17, who reported their incidents (71%), faced disrespectful attitude on the part of the police officers (such as taunts, mockery and inappropriate comments etc.).

Another 268 respondents interacted with police in different circumstances. Some of them faced unprofessional, unacceptable, and sometimes illegal attitude from law enforcement officers. Most often, respondents reported unethical talk and insults, but in some cases there was physical violence and even torture. In addition, every tenth of those who interacted with the police in 2020 noted that the police ignored hate crimes, refused to intervene and detain perpetrators. In some cases, the victims themselves were detained.

“My boyfriend and I were walking in the park at night and the police took us away, they thought we were making a stash of drugs. As a result, we spent all night at the police station. In the morning they let us go, drew up protocols against us and fined us 500 rubles. My boyfriend is 19 and I'm 33, so, of course, we heard from them a lot of shit about pedophilia and a lot of threats on this subject and on the subject of drugs. And they did that to scare us and make us tell about those who sell drugs. That's the story”

(a homosexual cisgender man, 33)

“I was beaten by an inadequate adult woman, I detained her and turned to the guards of the shopping center where this was happening. They took us to a closed room and called the police at my request. While we were waiting for the police, I faced homophobic insults from her, the guards just smiled. When the police arrived, this woman said that she was feeling bad and asked to call an ambulance. When they arrived, the police took me away, despite the fact that the physical abuse was only from the woman, and charges that they brought against me should have been brought against her. I was released after 5 hours, all this time in the department I felt uncomfortable, the officers were rude, other detainees freely discussed my appearance”

(a bisexual transgender woman, 24).

Type of incident	Number of people	% of those who interacted with the police in 2020 (268 people)
Inappropriate comments by police officers during a search or ID check	44	16,4%
Insults by police officers	34	12,7%
Undue attention on the part of the police officers purely due to a person's sexual orientation or transgender status (e.g. required to show ID, detained, etc)	29	10,8%
The police saw the attack by homophobic or transphobic people and could have prevented it, but did not intervene	23	8,6%
Threats from the police	21	7,8%
Physical assault by police officers	9	3,4%
Search of a dwelling because of sexual orientation or transgender status	5	1,9%

Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on LGBT* Communities

The COVID-19 pandemic is a problem that has affected everyone, including the LGBT* community of Saint Petersburg. We tried to find out how many LGBT* people were affected by the pandemic and to identify the specifics and vulnerabilities of the community.

According to the survey, more than a third of respondents (37,2%) had easy access to testing for COVID-19 and, accordingly, to timely diagnosis. Only 12,2% had no access at all. The rest were either not interested in this issue (the majority of respondents, 39,8%), or are not sure about the availability of tests (10,8%).

More than half of the respondents (60,5%) had the opportunity to observe all the necessary precautions (to buy and wear protective equipment, to avoid crowded places and to stay at home during self-isolation). A third of the respondents could partially comply with the requirements and recommendations in order to avoid infection. Only 6% were unable to protect themselves from the virus.

The biggest problem caused by the pandemic and quarantine was the deterioration in psychological well-being. It was reported by 60% respondents. Many reported that their psychological problems and disorders had returned or worsened. Let us recall, that as the reports about access to healthcare in 2020 showed, many were unable to obtain prescriptions for the drugs they needed, including antidepressants.

Some respondents were forced to spend all their time surrounded by homophobic or transphobic relatives and faced restrictions on freedom of expression, pressure, or even psychological and physical abuse from them. General instability and deteriorating financial situation also affected the psychological health of the respondents.

“I had to quit one of my jobs because sales were down. I spent the entire quarantine with my boyfriend and went cold on him. Due to the drop in income, we had to move from friends to his mom (we’re in a good relationship, although, of course, it’s more fun with friends). I’m tired of the lack of personal space (due to distance learning, my boyfriend does not leave the house)”

(a bisexual transgender man, 30).

“Because of self-isolation, I spend all my time at home, that greatly increases my anxiety. I don’t communicate with anyone and feel very lonely. The depression worsened significantly, and I began to feel more self-loathing. Sometimes I can’t find the strength to get out of bed for weeks. Sometimes self-loathing and anxiety drives me to self-harm. Because of this, my grades dropped significantly, and I lost almost all of my friends and acquaintances”

(a bisexual fluidflux person, 19).

“At that time, I lived with my parents, but because of the pandemic I lost my job and switched to distance learning therefore I had to spend almost all the time with my parents and completely depend on them financially, which affected very badly my already undermined mental health, since it is impossible express myself with them – they are religious, conservative and controlling”

(a bisexual transgender non-binary person, 19).

The second most common consequence of the pandemic was the deterioration of the financial situation of the respondents – it was faced by more than half of the respondents (56,7%). Some lost their jobs and all their income, or/and were forced to depend on relatives (in some cases, homophobic or transphobic) or partners. Many people faced decline in income and had no opportunity to find a new job or some side work.

“Due to the inability to receive treatment and due to the need to live with a family with which I have a conflict, my mental disorders worsened. There were many problems with self-harm (which I resisted for a year), alcohol (which I resisted for two years) and attempted suicide”

(a bisexual non-binary transmasculine person, 18).

A third of survey participants reported deteriorating health due to the coronavirus pandemic. Some have had health problems after the coronavirus. For some respondents, chronic diseases have worsened due to the lack of access to medical care.

“My wife and I had coronavirus, she has been seriously ill. We incurred huge expenses due to the cost of drugs, and the loss of income due to long stays at home. We are still sick, there are serious complications, but so far there is not enough money for treatment. We also need psychological help. Due to the coronavirus, we have lost hope of a completion of housing construction. We are getting on in years, and we will not build any other house, because we pay a loan for housing under construction”

(an asexual transmasculine non-binary person, 45).

“My loved one died due to the coronavirus. I lost my apartment. My work is physically hard and I have to work for many hours to get my life back. I still find it difficult to get over this loss, and I'm not sure if anything makes sense anymore”

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 23).

Almost a fifth of the respondents indicated that due to the pandemic, they were deprived of the opportunity to live comfortably. They were forced to move out of their rented apartments, return to their relatives, and live in much more constrained conditions.

It is also important to mention problems with legal gender change for transgender people in 2020. Due to the pandemic and quarantine, the process of changing documents has slowed down greatly, and this, in turn, has affected many other aspects of life, such as applying for jobs, access to various services, etc. Some suffered from the loss of loved ones, which also affected their psychological well-being. Some reported that the pandemic and closed borders disrupted their plans to marry abroad or emigrate.

“The pandemic has caused an increase in alcohol consumption (I drink every week in recent months) and the start of the use of illegal substances. Cancellation of a wedding (not for the first time), impossibility of emigration, lack of business development opportunities and bad market situation”

(a homosexual cisgender woman, 24).

“Almost all mental problems that were in remission returned, and getting help is now difficult and scary because of the pandemic, there is no money for it, as well as for pharmaceutical treatment”

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 22).

The center where I worked suspended its activities – the employees were left without work and wages. I had to live with an acquaintance who allowed herself talking unethical about LGBT* people.

(a bisexual cisgender woman, 24).

“My partner and I were unable to marry abroad”

(a homosexual cisgender man, 27).

Type of incident	Number of people	% of the total number
The pandemic had an impact on psychological health	800	65,3%
The pandemic had an impact on economic situation	531	56,7%
The pandemic had an impact on physical health	371	30,3%
The pandemic had an impact on housing	221	18%

Conclusion

The results of our survey show that LGBT* people of Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast often faced some form of homophobic and transphobic discrimination. Many face insults, threats, prejudice (including at school or work) – and some face physical and sexual violence. Homophobia and transphobia are the reasons why people lose their jobs, their homes and income. At the same time, law enforcement authorities are often inactive in such cases, and also can be a threat to LGBT* people.

The global problem of 2020 – the coronavirus pandemic – has caused significant damage to the Saint Petersburg LGBT* communities. Respondents report a particularly large scale of economic and psychological difficulties. This is evidenced not only by the answers to questions related to the pandemic, but also by other sections of the report: during 2020, many respondents faced problems with access to psychiatric care and prescriptions for drugs, lost the ability to pay for housing, and lost their jobs.

Transgender people are in a particularly vulnerable position. For three years our survey data show that the income level of transgender respondents is lower than the average for the sample. In addition, they are often denied access to services, including medical care, and it is more difficult for them to find employment and rent an apartment. The pandemic also affected the ability of transgender people to complete the process of legal gender change.

Since our massive survey has been conducted every year for the past three years, we can report some trends, both positive and negative. Positive trends include a gradual increase in people who are open to the majority of those around them (and, accordingly, a decrease in the number of completely closeted people). In addition, the most positive trend is the constant growth over three years in the number of respondents who assess their environment as LGBT*-friendly.

However, with all this, the number of people facing homophobic or transphobic threats and violence is increasing every year. This may be a consequence of the increasing openness of LGBT* people, as well as the radicalization of homophobic and transphobic sentiments among a diminishing conservative part of society.

Recommendations

To the Human Rights Ombudsperson in Saint Petersburg:

- To promote effective investigation and fair punishment of all acts of hate-motivated violence on grounds of SOGIGE of the victims, as well as actions aimed to incite hatred on the basis of SOGIGE.
- To continue facilitating a dialogue between the members of the local LGBT* initiatives and the city authorities and law enforcement structures.
- To continue including data on discrimination on the grounds of SOGIGE as well as other violations of the rights of LGBT* people in the Ombudsperson's annual reports.

To the Legislative Assembly of Saint Petersburg

- To initiate federal legislation aiming to abolish the art. 6.21 of the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships among minors.

To the Government of Saint Petersburg:

- To ensure the possibility and safety for the holding of peaceful public events in support of the rights of LGBT* people.
- To prevent ungrounded refusals of reconciling and other administrative impediments to the holding of peaceful public events in support of the rights of LGBT* people.

To the Main Department of Internal Affairs of Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast:

- To ensure effective investigation of all acts of hate-motivated violence on grounds of SOGIGE of the victims, as well as actions aimed to incite hatred on the basis of SOGIGE.
- To consider the motive of hatred or enmity in investigations in relation to LGBT* as a social group.

- To ensure the safety and the possibility of holding peaceful public events dedicated to the LGBT* issues*.
- To organize education for the staff of the law enforcement structures regarding respectful treatment of LGBT* people.

To the Courts:

- To take into account the decision of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, 151 issued on 23 September 2014, # 24 according to which, “sexual orientation as such may not be a legitimate criterion for establishing a difference in the legal status of an individual and a citizen” while examining cases related to LGBT* issues.
- To meticulously inspect cases for motives of discrimination and violence on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, if mentioned by the victim in their appeal, and to indicate these motives in court decisions.

To non-governmental organizations:

- To include aspects related to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression into programs, projects and events in collaboration with local LGBT* initiatives.
- To continue providing psychological and legal assistance to LGBT* people who have faced discrimination or violence on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
- To host events based on the principles of intersectional collaboration.

To private/commercial organizations:

- To prevent denials of employment, dismissals and other violations of labor rights of LGBT* people on the basis of SOGIGE.
- To provide services on equal terms regardless of the SOGIGE of the client.

COMING OUT

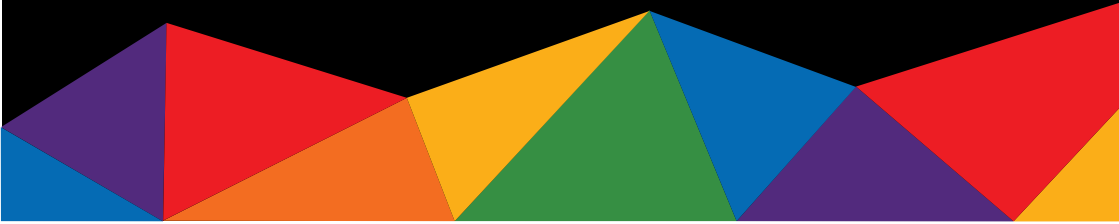
“Coming Out” is a regional nonprofit initiative group founded in 2008 in St. Petersburg, Russia. We work for universal recognition of human dignity and equal rights of all regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity by lobbying and advocacy, educational and cultural events, and providing psychological and legal services to LGBT* people.

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